

(8) Iraq's security forces are heavily infiltrated by sectarian militia, which has greatly increased sectarian tensions and impeded the development of effective security services loyal to the Iraq Government.

(9) With the approval by the Iraqi Council of Representatives of the ministers of defense, national security, and the interior on June 7, 2006, the entire cabinet of Prime Minister Maliki is now in place.

(10) Pursuant to the Iraq Constitution, the Council of Representatives is to appoint a Panel which will have 4 months to recommend changes to the Iraq Constitution.

(11) Despite pledges of more than \$8,000,000,000 in assistance for Iraq by foreign governments other than the United States at the Madrid International Donors' Conference in October 2003, only \$3,500,000,000 of such assistance has been forthcoming.

(12) The current open-ended commitment of United States forces in Iraq is unsustainable and a deterrent to the Iraqis making the political compromises and personnel and resource commitments that are needed for the stability and security of Iraq.

(c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that in order to change course from an open-ended commitment and to promote the assumption of security responsibilities by the Iraqis, thus advancing the chances for success in Iraq—

(1) the following actions need to be taken to help achieve the broad-based and sustainable political settlement so essential for defeating the insurgency and preventing all-out civil war—

(A) there must be a fair sharing of political power and economic resources among all the Iraqi groups so as to invest them in the formation of an Iraqi nation by either amendments to the Iraq Constitution or by legislation or other means, within the timeframe provided for in the Iraq Constitution;

(B) the President should convene an international conference so as to more actively involve the international community and Iraq's neighbors, promote a durable political settlement among Iraqis, reduce regional interference in Iraq's internal affairs, encourage more countries to contribute to Iraq's extensive needs, and ensure that pledged funds are forthcoming;

(C) the Iraq Government should promptly and decisively disarm the militias and remove those members of the Iraqi security forces whose loyalty to the Iraq Government is in doubt; and

(D) the President should—

(i) expedite the transition of United States forces in Iraq to a limited presence and mission of training Iraqi security forces, providing logistic support of Iraqi security forces, protecting United States infrastructure and personnel, and participating in targeted counterterrorism activities;

(ii) after consultation with the Government of Iraq, begin the phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq this year; and

(iii) submit to Congress a plan by the end of 2006 with estimated dates for the continued phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq, with the understanding that unexpected contingencies may arise;

(2) during and after the phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq, the United States will need to sustain a non-military effort to actively support reconstruction, governance, and a durable political solution in Iraq; and

(3) the President should carefully assess the impact that ongoing United States military operations in Iraq are having on the capability of the United States Government to conduct an effective counterterrorism campaign to defeat the broader global terrorist networks that threaten the United States.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, the current open-ended commitment of U.S. forces in Iraq is unsustainable and counterproductive, contributing as much to Iraqi instability as it does to Iraqi security.

Our troops have performed magnificently in Iraq. We are all deeply grateful for their professionalism and their sacrifices. But, ultimately, as our military commanders have repeatedly said, stability in Iraq can only come through a political settlement by the Iraqis, and the best way to bring about that political settlement is to make it clear, in words not yet spoken by the administration, that our commitment is not open-ended, and that a phased redeployment of our forces from Iraq will begin by the end of this year.

The administration's refrain that we are in Iraq as long as the Iraqis need us is creating a dependency of unlimited duration and gives the Iraqis the impression that their security is more in our hands than in theirs.

The hallmarks of the administration's open-ended policy are the President's extraordinarily broad and vague description of our mission—nothing less than “complete victory,” as he put it, along with the President's explicit commitment to stay until the Iraqis can “govern themselves, sustain themselves, and defend themselves.” The President's statement that American force levels in Iraq “will be decided by future Presidents” reinforced that unlimited commitment, as did Secretary Rice's statement that we will stay in Iraq “as long as we are needed.”

The President of Iraq, Mr. Talabani, reflected the Iraqi perception of the administration's policy when he said that U.S. forces are “ready to stay as long as we ask them no matter what the period is.” That is what the President of Iraq says he understands our policy to be, that U.S. forces are “ready to stay as long as we,” the Iraqis, “ask them, no matter what the period is.” We must change that Iraqi perception and the open-ended commitment which led to it, and that is what our amendment would do.

Our amendment urges the President to begin the phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq by the end of 2006—to begin the phased redeployment of U.S. troops by the end of 2006. Our amendment also calls for a number of actions to help achieve the broad-based and sustainable political settlement so essential for defeating the insurgency and preventing all-out civil war.

It calls for adoption by the Iraqis of a fair sharing of political power and economic resources among all the Iraqi groups so as to invest them in the formation of an Iraqi Nation. That can be done by amendment to the Iraq Constitution or by legislation or other means, but it needs to be done within the timeframe provided for in the Iraqi Constitution; namely, 4 months from the beginning of the functioning of their parliament.

An international conference needs to be convened so as to more actively in-

volve the international community and Iraq's neighbors in promoting a durable political settlement among Iraqis and by reducing regional interference in Iraq's internal affairs. It is also important to encourage more countries to contribute to Iraq's extensive needs and to ensure that pledged funds are forthcoming.

Our amendment also points out that it is critically important for the Government of Iraq to promptly and decisively disarm the militias and remove those members of the Iraqi security forces whose loyalty to the Iraqi Government is in doubt.

Now, what does our amendment urge the President to do relative to our troops in Iraq?

First, after consultation with the Government of Iraq, begin a phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of this year.

Second, submit to Congress a plan by the end of 2006 with estimated dates for the continued phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq, with the understanding that unexpected contingencies may arise.

Third, expedite the transition of U.S. forces in Iraq to a limited presence and mission of training, providing logistical support, protecting U.S. infrastructure and personnel, and participating in targeted counterterrorism activities.

Our amendment does not establish a fixed ending date for redeployment. It doesn't set out fixed milestones once the phased redeployment has begun. So while it does not establish a timetable, it does establish a fixed, but not precipitous, time for the beginning of a phased redeployment—by the end of this year.

Beginning the phased redeployment of American troops in 2006 would send a very clear message to the Iraqis: We have been in Iraq over 3 years. We have lost 2,500 brave Americans and suffered more than seven times that number of casualties to make it possible for Iraq to become a free Nation. You, the Iraqis, must now decide whether you want a civil war or a nation.

Madam President, sending that message to the Iraqis and ending the open-ended U.S. policy towards Iraq will prod the Iraqis to take the necessary steps to end the dominance of the militias; will reduce the Iraqi dependence on the U.S. security blanket which deters tough choices by the Iraqis; will change the perception that we are permanently occupying Iraq, a perception which plays into the hands of terrorists; will reduce the number of U.S. targets for terrorists and insurgents; and will reduce the strain on U.S. forces.

Supporters of our amendment are just as determined to maximize prospects for success in Iraq as are the opponents of our amendment. We do not accuse opponents of our amendment of wanting failure or of advocating surrender to chaos and terror. We do believe that maintaining the status quo